



**FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION  
OFFICE OF NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS &  
BUREAU OF SPECIAL GRANTS  
MARYLAND EMERGENCY FOOD PROGRAM**

**PROGRAM INFORMATION AND FUNDING GUIDELINES**

The Maryland Department of Human Services Family Investment Administration is pleased to announce the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Maryland Emergency Food Program (MEFP) Guidelines. All MEFP grantees must follow the provisions and requirements listed in this document. **Please read the FY 2025 MEFP Guidelines carefully before completing the [FY 2025 MEFP application](#).**

**Purpose of MEFP**

MEFP provides grants to Emergency Food Providers (EFPs) to provide groceries and meals, at no cost, to eligible households and individuals. These organizations are tax exempt agencies as well as local government-run agencies and include soup kitchens, food banks, food pantries, shelters, residential treatment programs, and after-school programs.

EFPs are also required to refer program participants to employment and training programs in their jurisdictions and disseminate information regarding the State's Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). A federally funded program, EITC provides a tax credit for low to moderate-income individuals, couples, and families. Each food site must display the EITC flyers in a prominent location for customers and make copies available for distribution. Supplemental information on the EITC can be found at:

[Maryland Comptroller Tax Credit and Deductions / Earned Income Tax Credit](#)  
and: [Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#)

*Reference: Md. Code Ann., Human Services Article §§ 6-409- 414; COMAR 07.01.20.01-.09*

MEFP grantees are encouraged, but not required, to help MEFP participants submit an application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). During a grantee orientation at the beginning of each State Fiscal Year, DHS will provide information regarding the process for becoming a SNAP outreach partner. In the meantime, MEFP applicants may view SNAP Outreach Program information on the DHS [website](#).

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for funding, if not administered through a local government agency, an organization interested in serving as an EFP must:

1. Be a verifiable tax-exempt organization as defined by the Federal Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
2. Be located within an established location that provides related services (community services, church outreach services, housing services).
3. Be an Emergency Food Provider for at least three years.
4. Be able to demonstrate community support in the form of cash or food donations from outside entities (as examples: local schools, churches, community food drives).

### **MEFP Fund Allocation**

The Department of Human Services Family Investment Administration has a total of \$1,001,171 to award grants to jurisdictions in Maryland based on indicators such as: number of individuals/families living in poverty; unemployment; and number of individuals/families receiving benefits from the Food Supplement Program.

**The maximum FY '25 MEFP grant award is \$50,000. The minimum FY '25 MEFP award amount is \$2,000.00. Organizations that have not received a MEFP award in the past three years will receive no more than \$2,000.**

### **MEFP Application**

Please answer all of the questions on the application accurately and thoroughly. You may use additional pages, as needed, in order to answer questions completely. **Applications that are incomplete, submitted without required signatures, or without the required documentation will be deemed ineligible.**

Applications are evaluated based on factors such as: the inclusion of all required documentation and signatures, thorough completion of all information requested in each section of the application, and proposed outcomes, including specific description of how grant funds will be used, goals for increased outreach, and explanation of need. DHS will also review prior performance of applicants that have previously received MEFP funding when considering their new applications.

**It is no longer required that an organization administering more than one food distribution program in a jurisdiction apply separately for each site or food program. The umbrella organization and fiduciary agent may submit one application for a grant that will be used to purchase food for all of their food programs in that jurisdiction. In the single application, all**

**organizations utilizing MEFP funds for food should be identified by location, program type and population served.**

It is the responsibility of each applicant to read and become familiar with the MEFP Guidelines. A grantee's failure to meet any of the grant requirements, such as timely reporting and submission of receipts, may be prohibited from receiving subsequent grants from DHS and may be required to return the current year's grant to the State of Maryland. **Signing and submitting the application constitutes the organization's agreement to abide by the MEFP Guidelines.**

#### **Application Deadline and Submission Information**

The FY '25 MEFP applications must be received by DHS no later than **5:00 PM on Friday, April 30, 2024**. Late applications will not be considered.

The FY '25 MEFP Application can be found here: [FY 2025 MEFP Application](#)

An application will be considered late if it is not received electronically through the [FY '25 MEFP Application Submission Form](#) by 5:00 P.M. on April 30, 2024. The MEFP application and all **required documents should be submitted at the same time**. Organizations submitting late applications will be notified of their ineligibility in writing. Please note that, except for additional pages on which to complete an answer, changes to the application will not be permitted without prior approval of DHS.

Electronic submissions must be sent to: [FY '25 MEFP Application Submission Form](#).

#### **Tax Exemption and Good Standing Documentation**

If applicable, documentation of tax-exempt status must be included with the application. The name of the organization on the IRS 501(c) (3) tax exemption letter must match the name of the organization applying. If you are included in an IRS 501(c) (3) group ruling as a member of a larger or parent organization, you must provide a statement from your parent organization, on official letterhead, verifying your inclusion in the group ruling.

If you do not have a recent version of your tax exemption documentation, please use this link to the IRS website [Tax Exemption Documentation](#), or contact the Maryland Office of Taxation and Assessments to locate your current tax-exempt status information and submit it with your application.

The applicant organization must provide their current EIN and if not in good standing and/or has a tax offset or lien, the organization will not be considered for funding. Please upload a screenshot of the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) with your application submission.

Visit the [Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation website](#) and search for your business:

1. Enter the organization's name in the search box;
2. Look for your organization in the **Search Results** and click on your organization's name;
  - a. Your organization's **General Information** page will open in a new tab.
3. Take a screenshot of the **General Information** page and upload it to the field below.

**Please note that if your organization is not in good standing and/or has a tax offset or lien, your organization will not be eligible for a Fiscal Year 2025 MEFP grant.**

### **Provider Information and Program Changes**

MEFP applications must include the **full legal name** of the food program, food program director and, if applicable, the name of the sponsoring organization (church, government agency, etc.) responsible for the program. MEFP award checks will be made payable to the **legal name of the applicant organization**.

**Any changes to the food program structure, including a change in leadership or food program closure, must be communicated to the MEFP Coordinator via email within 30 days of the event.** Programs that close or suspend operations for more than 60 days must return all unspent award funds before terminating operations.

### **Demographics Data Reporting**

Applicants must accurately complete the section of the application that requests demographic and service data; population served; and number of meals and/or groceries provided. Please complete the appropriate information for your type of food program. For example, a soup kitchen, shelter, or residential treatment program should provide the number of meals served per month; whereas a food pantry should provide the number of bags of groceries distributed per month. Applications will not be considered without this information.

### **Budget Information and References**

The budget section of the application must be accurately and thoroughly completed. MEFP funds should be kept separate from other funds on a financial statement or bookkeeping system. Records and customer files should be stored securely, in a locked room or filing cabinet. All supporting documentation must be maintained in your program files and available for review at the annual site visit and retained for a period of three years.

If your organization has not received a MEFP grant from DHS in the last three years, you must provide two letters of reference with original signatures. The letters must be from community groups or businesses with which the organization has done business. Additionally, letters of reference may be from an agency that refers customers to your organization or provides

volunteers for your program. The letters must be uploaded along with the [FY 2025 MEFP Application](#) through the [FY '25 MEFP Application Submission Form](#). The letters may not come from members of your own organization or DHS employees.

### **Award Use and Prohibitions**

Applicants granted MEFP funds will receive an award letter stating the terms of the agreement including: the award amount, grant year, deliverables with timelines, and DHS contact information. Grantees will also be required to sign a [DHS 655](#) Grant Agreement.

MEFP funds are approved for one fiscal year. For FY 2025, the award period is **August 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025**.

The MEFP grant is to be used **only** to purchase food for meals and/or groceries and distributed at no cost to individuals and households identified as eligible. MEFP funds may not be used for other purchases including food-related items such as cutlery, food storage containers, grocery store or other gift cards (unless designated as “food only”), paper or cleaning products. Providers are strongly encouraged to purchase food that is produced, grown and harvested in the State of Maryland and to purchase from local farmers markets when feasible and cost-effective.

Invoices alone do not constitute proof of purchase; therefore, invoices must be accompanied by a copy of the canceled check with the amount of the check matching the amount on the invoice.

Organizations must distribute food purchased with MEFP funds at no cost to eligible individuals or households and may not require individuals or households to purchase MEFP foods. This includes purchase through Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards (EBT). Food Supplement Program (FSP) benefits are intended for the recipient and his/her household exclusively.

### **MEFP Food Storage and Facility Management**

All MEFP food, perishable and non-perishable, must be kept in a designated area and labeled “MEFP.” Food may be stored in a separate unit or separated by labeling the individual shelves designated for MEFP food storage. MEFP storage areas and/or containers must be locked when not in use. You must also ensure that you do not distribute expired foods or dented cans and that a consistent inventory system is in place. Storage areas will be inspected during the MEFP monitoring visit.

If your organization repackages loose non-perishable or large packages of perishable food (e.g. separating bulk grains or bulk chicken breast packages into individual servings), kitchen and pantry workers must follow USDA’s safe food handling program protocols. If you have questions about those protocols, please contact the MEFP Coordinator for clarification.

MEFP food programs must follow their local health department regulations for sanitation, food service, quality control and cleanliness. All MEFP providers must have rodent and insect infestation controls for their facility.

### **Record Keeping**

Grantees must maintain accurate and detailed records regarding the use of MEFP funds. The grantees' records must include information on the demographics of the customers of the food program (adults, children, families, etc.) and number of bags of food distributed or number of meals served ("Units of Service") by the program.

Grantees must document all purchases made using the MEFP award and include proof of payment. Proof of payment documentation consists of an invoice(s) with a copy of the canceled check(s) and/or receipt(s) showing payment at point of sale. Receipts must: be legible; include the store name and date of purchase; reflect only MEFP eligible food items; and not exceed the MEFP grant amount **by more than a reasonable amount (within one hundred dollars whenever possible)**. Invoices not paid in full at point of sale must be accompanied by a canceled check. All canceled checks must show legible front and back sides.

MEFP Purchases should be made separately from other funding sources. This will help alleviate any perception of misuse of state funds. Quarterly reports with receipts, canceled checks and services provided must be submitted with a total number of individuals and families served and meals and/or groceries provided using MEFP funds. **Receipts reflecting purchases funded by sources other than MEFP will not be accepted.** In this case, DHS will notify the provider, within two business days following its review of a grantee's documentation, of the grantee's requirement to submit only those receipts which reflect MEFP purchases. Receipts should already be calculated before submission. Grantees must keep copies of documents and records relating to the MEFP award in their files. The Quarterly Report template will be included with your award letter.

### **Reporting Deadlines**

MEFP Quarterly reports are due to the MEFP Coordinator Leslie Rice on or before the deadlines listed on the following page. The [MEFP Quarterly Report](#) will be submitted through the [FY '25 MEFP Quarterly Report Submission](#) link.

**The reports are due each quarter, by the dates outlined in the chart below, regardless of whether funds were spent during the reporting period.** When MEFP funds have not been used in a particular quarter, the food program's director **must still submit an Activity Report for that quarter noting that no MEFP funds were expended and the reason why they were not used.** **Once all funds have been expended and the accompanying reports submitted, no further quarterly report submissions are required.**

All records, receipts and documentation to provide proof of expenditure of grant award funds must be maintained by the recipient organization for three years.

Late submissions of reports will be documented and noted in the grantee’s MEFP file as “non-compliant” for that quarter. **All instances of non-compliance will be considered when reviewing and scoring applications for subsequent MEFP grants.**

**Reminder emails or phone calls will not be sent out or made to programs.** Please note that the deadline for the final quarter has been shortened and fourth quarter receipts must be submitted earlier than previous quarters.

**Grantees must expend all MEFP funds by June 01, 2025 unless special permission has been given; any unexpended funds must be returned to DHS by June 30, 2025.**

<b>FY 2024 MEFP Quarterly Closing and Reporting Deadlines</b>		
<b>Quarter</b>	<b>Date Purchase</b>	<b>Submission Deadline</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	August 1 - September 30, 2024	October 11, 2024
2 <sup>nd</sup>	October 1- December 31, 2024	January 10, 2025
3 <sup>rd</sup>	January 1- March 31, 2025	April 11, 2025
4 <sup>th</sup>	April 1- June 30, 2025	July 11, 2025

**Site Visits**

Grantees will receive an annual or, in some cases, semi-annual site visit. New programs under consideration for funding will receive a site visit prior to the award decision. Returning grantees will be scheduled for an onsite visit during the fiscal year covered by the Grant. During a site visit, DHS staff will tour the food storage areas and review program records. DHS may request to review copies of current year financial statements, single audit reports, receipts for MEFP purchases and much more.

Grantees with an unsatisfactory site review will be granted a 60-day period to submit a corrective action plan and address the problem areas. All MEFP spending shall be suspended until the corrective action plan has been accepted and a satisfactory site review is achieved. If the corrective action plan is not implemented or is not successful, the program’s award will be revoked and any unspent funds must be returned to DHS.

If you have any questions during the application process or the award year, please contact: Leslie Rice, by email to: [leslie.rice@maryland.gov](mailto:leslie.rice@maryland.gov).

Thank you for your interest in the Maryland Emergency Food Program and for your service to the people of Maryland.